

ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN UNITED STATES TROOPS AND
SIOUX INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

*Information relating to an engagement between the United States troops and
the Sioux Indians near Fort Laramie.*

FEBRUARY 9, 1855.—Laid upon the table, and ordered be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, February 8, 1855.

SIR: In compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 3d instant, I have the honor to transmit herewith copies of all despatches and other information received by the department and on file in this office, relating to the engagement which took place near Fort Laramie, on the 19th of August, 1854, between a detachment of United States troops and the Sioux Indians.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JEFF'N DAVIS,
Secretary of War.

HON. LINN BOYD,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Report of Lieutenant Fleming.

FORT LARAMIE, August 20, 1854.

COLONEL: I have the honor to submit to you the enclosed report.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. B. FLEMING,
2d Lieutenant 6th Infantry, commanding Post.

Col. L. THOMAS,
Asst. Adjutant General, New York.

HEADQUARTERS, FORT LARAMIE, O. R.,
August 20, 1854.

COLONEL: I have the honor to make a report of an engagement between a detachment of company G, 6th regiment of infantry, and the Sioux Indians.

The Indians have been committing depredations upon emigrants and traders in this section of the country all summer, and those of the most daring kind. A few days since they came within two miles of the fort, and killed two head of cattle out of the interpreter's herd; pursuit was immediately made, but the troops were unable to overtake them. On the 18th instant one of the Sioux went to an emigrant train, passing along the road, and shot down one of the oxen in the train, which left the poor emigrant in a very destitute condition. This occurred close to the fort, and I was compelled to take notice of it, or give up entirely all protection to emigrants. The head chief of the Sioux came and reported the fact to me, and expressed a willingness to give up the offender. Accordingly, I sent Brevet 2d Lieutenant J. L. Grattan, 6th infantry, with the interpreter, Sergeant Faver, Corporal McNulty, and twenty privates, to receive the offender, and the whole detachment were *massacred* without exception. How this occurred I am at present unable to state, as there are so many different reports. I have no reliable information as to the number of Indians killed and wounded, but the Bear Head chief is reported among the killed. The Indians are hostile, menacing the fort; but all my men are on duty, and I think we shall be able to keep possession of it.

We stand much in need of more troops, and hope they will be sent as soon as possible. I have sent this by *express* to the commanding officer of Fort Leavenworth, and requested him to telegraph the same to you without delay.

Provision must accompany the troops, as we have only sufficient for those now at the post.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
H. B. FLEMING,
2d Lieutenant 6th Infantry.

Col. L. THOMAS,
Asst. Adjt. Gen. U. S. Army, New York.

Report of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Steptoe.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH,
September 29, 1854.

MY DEAR GENERAL: During the past week very contradictory rumors of some difficulty between the Indians and the troops at Fort Laramie were rife here, but it was only upon the arrival of the mail yesterday that the facts could be ascertained. These rumors kept me in most painful suspense, which was only removed by the cheering assurance of a gentleman there that the surviving garrison is prepared and able to defend itself in any further emergency.

Hearing it whispered about that the difficulty was occasioned entirely by the rashness of Lieut. Grattan, I think it due to the memory of that young officer that you shall be thoroughly informed as to the facts, and therefore take the liberty of extracting from a private letter just received.

Mr. J. H. Reid, a gentleman who accompanied my command as far as Fort Laramie, where he remained sick, writes:

"The best authenticated account seems to be that Mr. Grattan, expecting to get the Indian without any trouble, went into the midst of the Indian village with his men and pieces. He could not well have avoided this, as the lodges covered a space of three miles. The Chief of the Brulés, among whom the offender was staying, went with Mr. Grattan to the man, and he refused to go, saying 'he had two guns and plenty of arrows, and could fight.' About the time that Grattan regained his command, this Indian fired. G. then ordered his musketry to fire. The Indians, who had gathered about him to the number of fifteen hundred, perhaps, fell flat on their faces, and the balls passed over, as did also the whole charge of the pieces which were fired immediately afterwards. The whole party was then destroyed before either the cannon or the muskets could be re-loaded. They were all killed with knives and arrows. Lieut. G. had dismounted and given his horse to one of the men, while he worked as gunner, and was found where he fell, by the side of his piece."

This statement shows that Lieut. Grattan did not take the initiative, and it goes to confirm my opinion that the attack upon the troops was part of a deliberate plan. Why the attack was not followed by one upon the fort, I do not know.

Mr. Reid inveighs severely against the *traders*, a number of whom were in the vicinity. He asserts that they behaved in a dastardly manner, fleeing from their stone and adobe houses, which could have been easily defended, and not even stopping at the fort to give information that a fight had taken place.

My only purpose in troubling and intruding upon you with this letter, is to throw a little light on the matter in justice to Mr. Grattan.

I have the honor to be, General, very truly your friend,

E. J. STEPTOE.

Gen. DAVIS, *Washington, D. C.*

Report of Brevet Brigadier General Clarke.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE WEST,
Jefferson Barracks, October 5, 1854.

SIR: I enclose herewith a special report of Major Winship, and the papers accompanying it.

I commend his suggestions as to future operations as worthy of consideration, and add that it would be desirable that mounted troops, dragoons, and light artillery, in conjunction, be used in operations against the hostile Indians.

In addition to the Major's report and the accompanying statements,

I forward an extract of a journal kept by Mr. Carrey, a respectable French gentleman, kindly offered by him. Mr. Carrey is intelligent and adventurous, fond of and addicted to expeditions upon the plains. He would, I have reason to believe, return to the region of the Sioux, if furnished, at the expense of government, with a guide, animals, and servant, offering to collect there information as to the numbers, condition, locale, and haunts of the Sioux, and the features of the country. He would go if it be thought proper to send him under the auspices of a Mr. Sarpey, a St. Louis Creole, having trading establishments in the region of country the usual roam of that people. I believe Mr. Carrey can be relied upon, and would procure useful information. Moreover, he is a good topographer.

I suggest that in all cases of wrong committed by an Indian, his tribe should be deprived of annuities and presents until reparation be made, even though war should not become flagrant; and especially that the practice of giving arms and ammunition to Indians, and allowing traders to sell them, be discontinued, and that the prohibition to sell be rigidly enforced.

I have the honor to be, respectfully, your obedient servant,

N. S. CLARKE,

Colonel 6th Infantry, Bvt. Brig. General Commanding.

Colonel L. THOMAS,

Asst. Adjt. General, Headquarters of the Army, New York.

P. S.—As an additional precaution, I suggest that, whenever and wherever it can be done without a violation of treaty stipulations, blacksmiths or armorers in the Indian country be withdrawn, in order that Indians may not have the means or opportunity to obtain repairs to their firelocks.

N. S. CLARKE,

Colonel 6th Infantry, Bvt. Brig. General Commanding.

Indian affairs—highly interesting. I concur in the views of Brevet Brigadier General Clarke. Respectfully submitted to the Secretary of War.

WINFIELD SCOTT.

Respectfully submitted to the Secretary of War.

S. COOPER,

Adjutant General.

OCTOBER 11, 1854.

Report of Major Winship.

FORT LARAMIE, N. T., September 1, 1854.

MAJOR: An occurrence has come to my knowledge since my arrival at this post, which, in my judgment, demands from me a special report, although I am informed that the main facts in the matter have already been reported to the commander of the department.

A large body of Sioux Indians, composed of the bands of Brulés,

Ogalalas and Minicoujons, had been encamped six or eight miles below Fort Laramie for some time previous to the 19th ultimo, awaiting the arrival of the Indian agent, General Whitfield, to receive their annuities of presents. On the day previous to the date just named, an ox belonging to a train of Mormon emigrants was captured and killed by a Minicoujon Indian: in what manner and under what circumstances, I must leave the General commanding the department to judge, from the conflicting statements herewith transmitted.

On the same day that this depredation was committed, and the same that it was complained of by the owner of the ox, a very influential man among the Sioux, called the Bear, chief of the band of Brulés, came to the commanding officer of Fort Laramie, 2d Lieutenant H. B. Fleming, 6th infantry, and reported the circumstances of the case. He said that the offender was a Minicoujon Indian, residing for the time being in the Brulé camp, and suggested the propriety of sending a detachment of troops to demand him, in which event he had no doubt but the man would readily be given up, or language to that effect.

Accordingly, on the 19th of August, 1854, a party of twenty-nine enlisted men of company G, 6th infantry, under the command of Brevet 2d Lieutenant John L. Grattan, of the same regiment, was ordered to bring in the Indian, if practicable, without unnecessary risks.

The Sioux encampment was situated on the north fork of the Platte, between Gratiot's trading-house of the American Fur Company and that of a Mr. Bordeau, which are distant five and eight miles, respectively, from Fort Laramie, following the Oregon route down the Platte. The Ogalalas and Minicoujons lay between Gratiot's house and the Brulé camp, and stretched along a mile and a half or two miles parallel to, and between, the road and the river. They had to be passed, of course, in order to reach the camp of the Brulés, which lay with one extremity resting on or near the lower extremity of the Minicoujon camp, and the other on the Oregon road in the vicinity of Bordeau's trading-house. The Brulé camp was semi-circular in figure, having its convexity towards the river, and having in rear of it as light but abrupt depression in the ground, partially overgrown with bushes.

Lieutenant Grattan left the fort about 3 o'clock p. m., with his party and an interpreter, for the Brulé camp. Arrived at Gratiot's, he halted and caused his small-arms to be loaded, without capping; he then proceeded about two miles further—that is to say, near the upper extremity of the Brulé camp—and halted again to load two pieces of artillery (a twelve-pounder howitzer and a mountain howitzer) with which he had been provided. He here explained to the party the nature of the service to be performed, and how it was to conduct itself; then resuming his march, he moved on to Bordeau's house, sent for Mr. Bordeau himself, and requested him to go for the chief before named, called the Bear, with the view to availing himself of the authority and influence of that Indian for the accomplishment of his mission. The Bear came, but could not or would not deliver up the accused Minicoujon, and Lieutenant Grattan was therefore compelled to seek and take by force, if need be, the offender, or submit to the mortification of retiring without having accomplished the object of his mission; and rather than do this, he resolved boldly to enter the Brulé camp and take the Indian at all

hazards, having previously informed himself of the precise locality of the offender. This was nearly in the centre of the camp, and not far from the lodge of the Bear.

Up to this moment all the statements, verbal and written, which I have been able to obtain, substantially agree; but as to what transpired immediately after, there is much confusion, contradiction, and uncertainty, owing doubtless to the conflicting interests, prejudices, and predilections of the spectators of the scene, and to the hurried and confused movement of events ever incident to crises of danger. That which appears certain is, that so soon as Lieutenant Grattan commenced his movement into the Brulé camp, the younger warriors, not only of that band, but of the whole Sioux camp, commenced preparing to resist the capture of the Minicoujon depredator, by assembling in the brushwood and behind the bank before alluded to as characterizing the ground in the rear of the Brulé village. Not only this, but the old men in council clamored for delay; thereby indicating that they were unable to restrain their warriors, or that they were playing into their hands by giving them time for preparation. Lieutenant Grattan doubtless imagined that these indications were all unfavorable to the object of his expedition, and determined to bring the matter to an issue at once, by submitting the alternative of an immediate surrender of the offending Minicoujon, or instant hostilities against the Brulés. The result proves what must have been the reply of the Indians, for, although it is impossible to ascertain which party struck the first blow, it is positively established beyond all contradiction that the troops had scarcely time to make a single discharge of their small-arms and the two pieces of artillery they carried with them before their commander and a large portion of their numbers were struck dead upon the ground they occupied. Those who escaped instant slaughter, after making a fruitless effort to disengage themselves from the network formed by a thousand or fifteen hundred warriors, fell fighting individually or in small parties, until the whole detachment was, in the forcible Indian phraseology, completely "wiped out," but one man having escaped, with great difficulty, to the fort, and he died in two or three days afterwards of his wounds.

The above are all the reliable facts which I have been able to gather of this unfortunate affair, except that the interpreter, Mr. Lucien Auguste, who accompanied the expedition, and who was also killed, was undoubtedly intoxicated, and behaved in a very indecorous and offensive manner towards the Indians. His conduct unquestionably irritated the young men very much; but it is preposterous to assert, as many do here, that the insolence of a drunken interpreter, whose language the Indians well knew to be his own, and not that of the officer for whom he came to interpret, was the only or even the principal cause of the massacre of the troops. He is well known to have been very obnoxious to the Brulés, and his blood was doubtless sought for with more eagerness than that of any other individual of the party; but if his death alone were desired, it is obvious that it could have been much more easily and safely accomplished than by an open and audacious act of hostility against the government of the United States; and this is

further evident from the events which followed, and which could have had no connexion whatever with the then butchered interpreter.

Immediately after the massacre of Lieutenant Grattan and his party, the Indians, intoxicated by their victory over the troops, whom they had hitherto regarded with respect, and even fear, thought to crown their success by an assault upon the fort, which they knew to be in a very defenceless condition after the destruction of so large a portion of its feeble garrison; but it was not difficult to persuade them to reject an enterprise which offered them but few chances for success, and no corresponding reward in case of victory, for they would have been compelled to burn up the buildings of the fort, and all it contained, in order to reach its garrison. They preferred the safer and better-rewarding exploit of plundering Gratiot's trading-house of the American Fur Company of the government goods there deposited, which only awaited the arrival of the Indian agent to be distributed among them. This insult to the government of the United States was perpetrated on the morning following the massacre of Lieutenant Grattan's party, and may be regarded as the sequel to that barbarous outrage. There being no further mischief to do in this vicinity, which could be committed with impunity, they left for the north, probably for their accustomed haunts on White river, destroying on their way the houses, farming implements, &c., belonging to the government farm, which is located some twelve miles north of Fort Laramie, besides carrying off some ten or twelve animals, which they captured in the combat.

It is not for me to anticipate what action, if any, the government will take in this matter, although I cannot refrain from expressing it as my settled conviction, founded upon personal observation of not only the Sioux, but of the other principal tribes of the plains, that the time has now fully arrived for teaching these barbarians a lesson, which they are as yet very far from having learned; and that is, how to appreciate and respect the power, the justice, the generosity, and magnanimity of the United States. It is a notorious fact—one which has been vouched for by every man I have met with who has resided or travelled upon the plains—that the Indians listen with contemptuous incredulity to the tales of their chiefs and great men who have visited the States, relative to the numbers and power of the whites. So true is this, that those chiefs dare not tell the tithe of what they have seen in the States, lest they should be branded as liars, madmen, or fools, and thus lose all influence and respect among their tribes. But I shall speak more fully upon this subject in the general report of the tour of inspection which I am now making, where it can be more legitimately treated.

Should an expedition be sent against the Sioux, I cannot too strongly recommend that it be directed by way of the Missouri, upon which stream and its tributaries the Eau-qui-court or Running Water, White river, Strayan, and Moro, the Titons or Southern Sioux mostly live. Fort Pierre I should consider the most eligible point from which to operate against the Brulés and Minicoujons, and Fort Laramie for operating against the Ogalalas. Troops could, and should, be sent to reinforce Fort Laramie at once, and a strong force might be despatched up the Missouri next spring, when the river opens—say early in April. The great advantages of sending troops up the Missouri are—first, that

transportation by that route can be had which shall be cheaper, and much more speedy, than that by land; and, secondly, the appearance upon the Upper Missouri of a respectable body of troops, would have all the effect of a surprise upon the Indians. Moreover, the distance of Fort Pierre from Fort Laramie is but little more than half of that from Fort Leavenworth to the latter; so that Fort Laramie might well be supplied from Fort Pierre, as there is already a tolerable wagon-road between the two points. There are other military considerations which indicate the propriety, if not the necessity, of establishing a post high up on the Missouri, and which I shall venture to urge in a *projet* for the better occupation of the Indian country, to be set forth in my general report.

In conclusion, I would state that I have not deemed it necessary to repeat all the idle and inconsistent tales afloat here in regard to the incidents of the conflict of the 19th of August; such, for example, as relate to the initiative in the combat—whether Lieutenant Grattan shot the Bear, or the Bear Lieutenant Grattan; whether the Bear urged Lieutenant Grattan not to proceed to extremities, as some say, or whether he bantered him by saying, “You are a soldier—go and take the accused,” as others assert. It would be as impossible to reconcile all these conflicting statements—which are mainly the result of conflicting interests, prejudices, and predilections—as it would be immaterial to the true point at issue so to do. It should be borne in mind that the question is, had the government agent and commanding officer at Fort Laramie a right to demand the surrender of the offending Indian? If so—and I apprehend that no one will question this right—there can be no difficulty in pronouncing upon the character of the act by which a gallant officer and thirty men, in the service of the government, lost their lives in the effort to enforce said demand.

All collateral issues, got up by interested persons, to weaken the effect on the public mind of the stubborn fact that a detachment of United States troops were butchered to a man, in endeavoring to perform a duty, recognised as perfectly legitimate, by even the savages themselves, will, I trust, be treated as they deserve, and the government will doubtless know how to vindicate its own dignity, and to protect the lives and property of its citizens.

I have the honor to be, Major, your obedient servant,

O. F. WINSHIP,

Asst. Adjt. General.

Brevet Major F. N. PAIGE,

Asst. Adjt. Gen. U. S. A.,

Headquarters Department of the West, Jefferson Barracks, Mo.

Statement of Mr. O. Allen, regarding the engagement which took place near Fort Laramie on the 19th of August, 1854, between a party of United States troops, under the command of Brevet Second Lieutenant John L. Grattan, sixth infantry, and a body of Sioux Indians.

On the 19th of August, 1854, Lieutenant Grattan, accompanied by an interpreter and twenty-nine enlisted men of the garrison of Fort

Laramie, left that post between two and three o'clock p. m. for the purpose of visiting the encampment of the Sioux Indians, situated near Bordeau's trading-house, on the North Platte, about eight miles below the post, for the purpose of bringing away an Indian who had been charged with killing an ox belonging to an emigrant. On arriving at the trading-house of the American Fur Company, called Gratiot's Buildings, the party halted and loaded its muskets, without capping. It then moved on about two miles further, when it was again halted, and told by Lieutenant Grattan the object of the expedition, who further assured his men that the Indian he was about to demand must be taken, if not freely given up, at all hazards, even if he (Lieut. G.) died in the effort; that he did not expect, however, to be compelled to fire a single gun; that, if obliged to fight, the party would obey no orders coming from any one but himself and the sergeant present; and that every order coming from the latter would be respected as coming from himself. He then detailed the men for the howitzers, (one twelve-pounder and one mountain howitzer,) and finding a deficiency in the detail of one man, he gave his horse to one of the soldiers, saying that he would act as gunner himself. The party then proceeded to Bordeau's trading-house, about two miles further on, and in the immediate neighborhood of the Indian camp, which lay stretched along the course of the Platte, having the road to the right and the river to the left, and having a small patch of brushwood, and a rather abrupt break in the ground between the camp and the river. Lieutenant Grattan halted near that part of the camp occupied by the Brulés, (among whom the Indian pursued had taken refuge,) and had in that position another of the Sioux bands on his left flank and rear. He here ordered this infantry to cap, and the gunners to load with grape and cannister; inquired for Mr. Bordeau, and requested him to send for the head Sioux chief, the "Bear;" the chief came, with several other Indians, mostly unarmed. Lieutenant Grattan desired Bordeau to tell them that he had come for the Indian that had killed the emigrant's ox. The Bear seemed to be enraged, and made some reply that I did not understand. I think they refused to give the man up; whereupon Lieutenant Grattan told them he would be obliged to fight them if they did not surrender the accused Indian. The Bear replied, "Go down to the lodge where the man is, and see what he will say." Lieutenant Grattan then ordered his men to mount, (the wagon and gun-carriages,) and the party moved into the village, the howitzers leading, and the wagon containing the infantry following in rear. I mounted my horse to proceed with them, after having asked Bordeau and another person if there was likely to be a conflict, and receiving for a reply that they thought not. I waited on my horse about twenty minutes in conversation with Bordeau and a person named Raynall, when an Indian came up from the village for Mr. Bordeau to act as interpreter. He left with my mare, and I went on the house-top with Mr. Raynall to see what was going on. In a few moments after Mr. B. returned, saying that he had not been where the troops were, and that he was afraid there was going to be a fight. About fifteen minutes after this, another Indian came to ask the services of Mr. Bordeau as interpreter, as he was afraid there would be trouble in the camp, and the Indians would no longer listen to

the government interpreter, (Mr. Lucien Auguste.) Mr. B. proceeded to within about twenty-five yards of the place where the Indians and Mr. Grattan were in council, and then returned apparently much excited, and ordered all the arms about the establishment to be loaded, and a defensive attitude assumed, he himself running to his lodge for his gun. As he left, I saw the troops rise up and level their muskets, when the Indians instantly fired upon them, and the troops as promptly replied with musketry. I should have observed that while the council was being held, from three to five hundred warriors left the camp and prepared for fighting in the patch of brushwood and behind the little inequality of the ground before named. In less than a minute after the above exchange of shots between the Indians and the infantry, the field howitzer was discharged, followed immediately by the mountain howitzer. It was at this moment that private Williams retreated with the limber of the field howitzer through the village directly towards the road, followed by the wagon which had brought the infantry, whereupon the Indians made a general rush upon the troops. The interpreter and the soldier in charge of the lieutenant's horse endeavored to escape on their animals, but were followed about half a mile and killed. The remainder of the party endeavored to escape by means of the wagon; but failing to overtake it, they halted and showed a determined front to the Indians, who had by this time come from every quarter of the camp, and had completely surrounded them. They fell, to a man, on the last ground they had taken. I think that Lieutenant Grattan fell at the first fire; his body, as well as those of the two enlisted men, was found lying beside his gun.

The interpreter, Mr. Auguste, was evidently excited by liquor, and it was owing to his extravagant conduct towards the Indians, doubtless, that the collision took place. He had drunk nothing, apparently, when he left the garrison, but on arriving at Gratiot's house he left for a few minutes, and re-appeared intoxicated. Lieutenant Grattan seeing his condition, and ascertaining that he had about half a gill of liquor about him, took it from him and destroyed it.

Upon seeing that the party had been destroyed, I mounted my horse with the intention of starting at once for the fort, but was told by Messrs. Bordeau and Raynall that it would be rash in me to attempt to reach the garrison at that time. The Indians were already charging upon the houses. I tied my horse and went in; and upon my entrance into the house, an Indian leaped in also, and exclaimed, "Let us wipe out the whites here;" and at the same instant he seized upon Mr. Raynall, when certain other Indians, relatives of Mr. Bordeau's, said to them, if they intended to kill the whites, to commence on themselves first; and one of these friendly Indians endeavored to shoot the man who struggled with Raynall. Mr. R. knocked up the gun, and the ball went into the ceiling, whilst he threw his adversary out of the door.

The village had commenced, in the mean time, to move off, crossing to the left bank of the Platte, leaving the Bear's lodge standing. In about an hour afterwards the warriors returned to Bordeau's, demanding various articles of goods in the store. Bordeau thinking that these demands were made expecting he would refuse them, and thus give a pretext for a quarrel, gave them all they asked. About 12 o'clock,

midnight, they returned to the side of the old camp, to the Bear's lodge, and shortly after left Bordeau's place. An Indian then came into the house with a wounded soldier, about twenty other Indians being present; some friendly and some not. This Indian told those around him, "If you kill this soldier, you kill me, for I shall die with him." The hostiles then warned Bordeau, that he had better not keep the soldier in the house, else they would "wipe out the whites," and they further told him to advise the soldier to conceal himself in the bushes. Then Bordeau asked the soldier if he was able to walk to the fort; and being told by him that he thought he was, Mr. B. directed the Indian who had brought him in, to take him to the road and start him off in the direction of the fort. The Indian took him on the road about a mile and a half towards the garrison.

All was quiet from this time until day-break, when the Indians struck their camp and started their families towards the Raw Hide, about ten miles north of the Platte; and when they had got their village in motion, they returned to remove the Bear and his lodge. Having got his lodge across the river, all the warriors returned to see how many soldiers they had killed and wounded the day before, and reported twenty-nine men killed. They acknowledged at the same time that the Bear had been wounded; one of his arms being broken, besides receiving a shot through the body, and one through the knee. Two other Indians were also slightly wounded. "Now," said they, "we have wiped out these soldiers, let us go to the fort, and wipe them out there; the houses are of pine, and we can easily burn them." Mr. Bordeau said to them to take his counsel for once, and not attempt to disturb the fort. The Indians then said they would go to Gratiot's, (the American Fur Company's establishment,) and take the goods belonging to the government, which were there awaiting the arrival of the Indian agent to be distributed amongst them; and at the same time I saw some thirty or forty of them going to Gratiot's. The remainder then left Bordeau's, and went to overtake their village; and fifteen minutes after, the wounded soldier before spoken of appeared again, and Mr. Bordeau was warned again that he had better advise him to conceal himself until the young men had left the vicinity. The soldier then went to the brushwood, near the river, and concealed himself.

About this time, Mr. Bordeau and myself went down towards the river to see how many of the troops they had killed, and what they had done with the guns. We found the larger howitzer on the ground where it had been dismounted. They had taken all the ammunition belonging to the guns, as well as the small howitzer, with them.

Mr. Grattan and two men were found near the large gun, and the remainder of the party were scattered along the road for a mile or a mile and a half, all dead, and mostly killed by arrows. The Indians again made their appearance, and we returned to the house and watched their motions coming over the hills. Mr. B. said that they were either going to attack the fort or take the goods of the Indian agent at Gratiot's, and in about an hour afterwards an Indian appeared with a pack-mule loaded with these same goods.

The Indians stopping about the premises seeing this, suggested that the goods belonged as much to them as to those who were appropriating them. It was better that they should go and take their share of the spoil; and when they had departed for that object the wounded soldier again made his appearance, and Mr. Raynall concealed him in the blacksmith shop. Finally, we started him for the fort in a buggy, which broke down on the way, when I took him on my horse for the remainder of the way.

O. ALLEN.

I certify that the above is a true copy of the original statement in my possession; which original being taken on paper by myself under the dictation of Mr. Allen, was written too hurriedly to be very legible, which is the reason for sending this copy instead.

O. F. WINSHIP,
Assistant Adjutant General.

FORT KEARNEY, *September 16, 1854.*

Respectfully forwarded to the commander of the Department of the West.

I regard this statement as the most reliable one I have yet heard, of the catastrophe of the 19th of August, near Fort Laramie. It is given by an individual who appears to be entirely disinterested, he having arrived at Fort Laramie from California but the day before the event transpired. He accompanied the expedition to Bordeau's house, from the top of which he witnessed all the movements of both parties.

O. F. WINSHIP,
Assistant Adjutant General.

FORT KEARNEY, *September 16, 1854.*

Statement of James Bordeau.

FORT LARAMIE, *September 2, 1854.*

SIR: I have not the honor of your acquaintance; but, from the situation of the country at the present time, I take the liberty of writing to you to inform you of facts as near as possible concerning the fight between the United States troops and the Sioux Indians on the 19th of last month; I having been an eye-witness to the battle, and having heard the true causes, I think, of its having occurred. On the 17th of last month there was a train of Mormon emigrants passed the village of the Brulés, Wazzazies, and Ogalalla bands of Sioux Indians, which were camped on the Platte river, six miles, more or less, below Fort Laramie; and after the train had got pretty well past the village, there was a man behind the train driving a lame cow, and by some means or other the cow got frightened, and ran towards the village. The

man in turn having some fears, and not knowing that the Indians would not harm him, he left the cow, and an Indian, a stranger, from another band of Sioux called the Minne-Cousha, killed the cow, and they ate it; and accordingly the emigrants, as they passed the fort, reported the affair, and on the 19th Lieutenant Grattan, with a command of twenty-nine soldiers, with the interpreter, came to the village to make the arrest of the Indian who killed the cow. The Lieutenant came to me to learn the best way to get the offender, and I told him that it was better to get the chief to try and get the offender to give himself up by his own good will, but he was not willing. The offender requested of the Indians to let him do as he pleased, for he wanted to die, and that the balance of the Indians would not have anything to do with the affair; and then the Lieutenant asked of me to go in the village with him, and I started to go, when another express came and said that the offender would not give himself up; and then the Lieutenant asked me to show him the lodge that the offender was in, and I did so. He then marched with his men into the village within about sixty yards of said lodge, and then fired upon the Indians. The first fire was made by the soldiers, and there was one Indian wounded; and then the chiefs harangued to the young men not to charge on the soldiers; that, being that they, the soldiers, had wounded one Indian, they possibly would be satisfied; but the Lieutenant ordered his men to fire their cannon and muskets, and accordingly the chiefs that had went with the soldiers to help to make the arrest, ran, and in the fire they wounded the Bear chief of the Wazzazies; and as soon as the soldiers' fire was over, the Indians in turn rushed and killed the Lieutenant and five men by their cannon, and the balance of the soldiers took to flight, and were all killed in one mile or so from the cannon; and when the Indians returned they rushed on my houses, and tried to massacre us all; but, for some friends among the Indians we were able to stop them in their career, and succeeded in pacifying them. They also talked of coming to the fort and killing all of the soldiers; but, by my begging of the chiefs, they succeeded in stopping them. I told them that if they did not do any more harm, possibly their Father would look over the matter. The Indians then rushed into my store, and helped themselves to what goods they wanted; also, outside of the houses they helped themselves to cattle and horses. They kept us up and on guard all night; and I kept them, by talking, not to use any further means of destruction towards the whites and soldiers. The next morning they went to the American Fur Company's houses, and took by force their goods that had been sent up by government for their annual payment, and were stored at that place; also, they broke open the store of the American Fur Company, and helped themselves to what they wanted. So no more at present.

Yours, truly,

JAMES BORDEAU.
Per SAMUEL SMITH.

Major WINSHIP.

Witness that the above is correct, the undersigned being present :

ANTOINE RAYNALL,
PETER PEW,
ZOFIEL GRAPH,
ANTONIO LE WHONE,
SAMUEL SMITH,
PAUL VIAL,
JOSEPH JEWETT.

Respectfully forwarded to the commander of the Department of the West.

In transmitting this statement I feel it incumbent on me to inform the department commander that Mr. Bordeau is an Indian trader, and has a Brulé wife and several Sioux connexions. His interests, of course, are opposed to any rupture between the government and the Sioux. The endorsers of his statement I am not acquainted with, except by repute. They are all mountain men, who, if we may credit the character they give each other, and the character they bear among disinterested persons, cannot be regarded as very reliable. At all events, some of them stand charged here with making two different statements of the massacre of Lieutenant Grattan's party, from which imputation Mr. Bordeau himself has not escaped, although I am inclined to think he meant to be candid. He was not on the ground when the conflict commenced, but was occupied in putting his houses in a defensive state. When, therefore, he speaks so positively as to which party fired first, he evidently betrays a strong bias in the premises. This feeling, however, is sufficiently manifest in the statement itself, of which I would commend a careful perusal.

O. F. WINSHIP, *A. A. G.*

FORT LARAMIE, *September 2, 1854.*

Report of Lieutenant Fleming.

HEADQUARTERS, FORT LARAMIE, NEBRASKA,

August 30, 1854.

MAJOR: I have the honor to make a report of an engagement between a detachment of troops belonging to G company 6th infantry and a band of Sioux Indians. The Indians have been committing depredations upon emigrants and traders in the country all summer, and those, too, of the most daring kind. A few days since they came within two miles of the fort, and killed two head of cattle out of our Indian interpreter's herd; pursuit was immediately made, but the troops were unable to overtake them. On the 18th of August, one of the Sioux went to an emigrant train passing along the road, and tried to kill one of them; but failing in this, shot down one of the cattle in the train, which left the poor emigrant in a very destitute condition. This occurred close to the fort, and I was compelled to take notice of it, or give up entirely all protection to those travelling on this route. The head chief of the Sioux

came and reported the fact to me, and expressed a willingness to give up the offender.

Accordingly, I sent Brevet Second Lieutenant J. L. Grattan, 6th infantry, with the interpreter, Sergeant Faver, Corporal McNulty, and 27 privates, to receive the offender; and the whole detachment were massacred with the exception of one man, who died at this place three days after this sad and bloody affair. How this occurred I am unable to state with any degree of accuracy. I have no reliable information as to the number of Indians killed and wounded; the "Bear," head chief, is reported among the killed. The Indians are hostile, menacing the fort; but all my men are under arms, and I think we shall be able to keep possession of it. We stand much in need of more troops, and hope they will be sent as soon as possible. Provisions must accompany the troops, as we have only sufficient for those now at the post. Lieutenant Grattan, it appears, was about the first one of the persons killed, and died near a howitzer performing his duty. In a great measure, I think the loss of men was attributable to his early loss, thus leaving them without a commander. We also lost twelve mules and harness, one horse, two howitzers, and one wagon, besides other ordnance stores; however, since, we have recovered the howitzers and wagon. What effect this success will have upon the Indians I am almost unwilling to conjecture: some, at least, it can make but little worse.

Should a sufficient force be sent out immediately by the government to punish the offenders in an effectual manner, no hostility from other surrounding tribes may be expected. But should this not be done, then great sacrifice of life may be expected; as all the surrounding tribes, stimulated by neglect of this bloody massacre, will join hand in hand and rush on to the slaughter.

I have recommended that all traders in the country be prohibited from trading guns or ammunition on any pretence whatever, and the Indian agent, General Whitfield, has accordingly prohibited this kind of trade with the Indians till further orders. This I consider, with all who have any knowledge of the dangerous state of the country, as a commendable stroke of policy in General Whitfield. In fact, I might add, at present this is the only effectual means we have of protecting ourselves.

Respectfully submitted:

H. B. FLEMING,

Second Lieut. 6th Infantry, Comd'g.

Major O. F. WINSHIP,

Asst. Adjt. Gen., Inspecting the Department.

Extract from my journal of a trip from Fort Leavenworth, Missouri, via Fort Atkinson and Laramie, to Fort Kearney, O. R., furnished at request of First Lieutenant W. S. Hancock, adjutant 6th regiment of infantry.

August 14. Met, 150 miles south of Fort Laramie, eight or ten men on their way to the Huerfano settlement. One of these had been my

guide from the upper Missouri. I felt astonished at seeing them leaving the country of the Sioux, where they had been trading for many years. They answered to my questions on this subject, "that the Sioux were too bad; that there was no longer any security among them for their stock or families; that since the day some Sioux had been killed by the troops, they were speaking of nothing else but revenge, and were determined to kill all the soldiers residing on their lands. Their impression was that all this would end in war; that the trade would be ruined—so they preferred leaving the country."

On my arrival at Laramie a few days after, I found there some ten Canadians, who took me for Major Winship's guide. I asked them for some details of the fight which had taken place on the 19th. They all agreed in saying that, since several days, the Sioux were speaking of nothing else but their intention of avenging themselves—boasting they were strong enough to destroy all the soldiers if they could only find them out of the fort.

They told me that on the 18th, I think, a Sioux killed a cow belonging to an emigrant. Immediately the "Bear," chief of all the Sioux nation, and particularly of the "Brulés," came to the fort and reported the fact to Messrs. Fleming and Grattan. He added that the culprit ought to be punished; that he would have given him up himself, but that he was not a "Brulé;" he was a Minicoujon, though he had his tent among the "Brulés." He was afraid, he said, that in case he should give him up himself, the warriors of his nation would accuse him of being too partial to the whites. It was better, he thought, for Mr. Fleming to send a detachment of twenty or thirty men; the culprit would then surrender.

Lieutenant Grattan started with twenty-nine men and "Auguste," the interpreter. Auguste, when he started, was in a state of intoxication; and crossing the village extending alongside of the road for a distance of about three miles, he dared them to accomplish their threats—adding that he was coming with thirty men and a cannon, and that this time he would *eat their hearts raw*.

As Lieutenant Grattan proceeded through the camp to reach the lodge of the culprit, which was situated at the further extremity of the camp, every warrior, taking his arms and mounting his horse, came and took his position behind the lodge of the culprit and that of the "Bear." They were protected by an accident of ground and shielded by bushes.

Lieutenant Grattan proceeded first to the house of Bordeau, situated at the extremity of the village.

He then called for the "Bear," and summoned him to surrender the culprit. To this summons the "Bear" answered he could not surrender him; that his warriors were opposed to it; but *perhaps* the culprit might surrender himself. The latter, however, refused to do it, saying he would sooner die. The "Bear" then told Lieutenant Grattan that the best plan would be for him to retire to the fort; that *perhaps* in a few days the man might be talked into surrendering himself.

Lieutenant Grattan answered, he had come there to seize the man, and would not retire until he had him. Then, said the "Bear," impa-

tiently pointing to the man's lodge, "if you will have him, go and take him yourself."

Lieutenant Grattan, with his party, entered the camp, and proceeded towards the lodge of the culprit. Before reaching the lodge he halted, and conversed again with the "Bear."

Auguste, as I have previously said, being in a state of intoxication, Lieutenant Grattan sent twice for Bordeau, that he might take him as an interpreter.

On receiving his first message, Bordeau started, but turned back immediately, saying, "those whites are going to be murdered."

To Lieutenant Grattan's second message, he refused coming. "I acted so," he told me afterwards, "because I had my family and property to watch over, and I had to put my house in a state of defence."

In the meanwhile the Indians had nearly surrounded Lieutenant Grattan and his party at the distance of 20 or 25 paces, armed and ready for a fight.

Lieutenant Grattan then commanded "fire." The Indians instantaneously rushing on the troops, in less than a second himself and nearly all his men were killed. Some tried to escape, but were soon joined by the Indians and experienced the same fate, with the exception of one who was spared, but only to die the next day from his wounds.

Not a single Indian was killed; the "Bear" received three wounds, and two other men slightly wounded.

A few days after, Bordeau requested me to give him some information about the Huerfano settlement, saying, as war between the United States government and the Indians was inevitable, and there was no longer any security for himself and family, he was going to leave the country, hard as it was for him to leave his trade and houses. He would wait, however, until the arrival of the Indian agent.

A few days after, the Indian agent having arrived, Bordeau and the other traders returned to their houses.

I afterwards was told, it was said among the Indians that this had been prepared beforehand by the Bear, who had told them to be ready for the fight, the Bear having himself killed Lieutenant Grattan as he ordered "fire."

I learned, also, that at the fort the Bear was constantly to be seen with Lieutenant Grattan, who had a great confidence in him.

Having been asked by several persons in this city, whether at the time Lieutenant Grattan was not in a state of intoxication, I will state that Mr. Reed, a gentleman from this city, who lived for nearly two months in Lieutenant Grattan's own quarters, told me *he had never seen him intoxicated*, and that at the moment he started *he was perfectly sober*.

I beg to remain yours, respectfully,

PAUL CARREY.

JEFFERSON BARRACKS, Mo., *October 2, 1854.*

SIR: I have transmitted this paper, thinking it might throw some light upon one or two disputed points in connexion with the subject of

the late massacre at Fort Laramie, O. R. The writer, Mr. Carrey, is a French gentleman of credit and standing in St. Louis, Mo.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WINF'D HANCOCK,

Adjutant 6th Infantry.

To the ASSISTANT ADJUTANT GENERAL,
Headquarters, Department of the West.

Report of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Hoffman.

HEADQUARTERS, FORT LARAMIE, N. T.,

November 19, 1854.

MAJOR: I have the honor to make the following report of the massacre of Lieutenant Grattan and his command, as requested by your instructions of _____.

It appears that in August last, a cow belonging to a Mormon emigrant was killed by a Sioux Indian belonging to the Minicoujon band, who was at the time living with the Brulés. On the 18th, the Bear, the head chief of the Sioux, reported the fact to Lieutenant Fleming, and told him he would give up the offender. On the 19th, Lieutenant Fleming sent Lieutenant Grattan, with the interpreter, a sergeant, corporal, and twenty-seven men, and two twelve-pounder howitzers, to receive the man, with discretionary orders in case of refusal to give him up.

There is no doubt that Lieutenant Grattan left this post with a desire to have a fight with the Indians, and that he had determined to take the man at all hazards. On reaching Mr. Bordeau's trading-house, which was just within the camp, he had an interview with the Bear; and finding that he could not or would not give up the man, he moved his command into the camp, and placed his cannon and his infantry in line fronting the lodge occupied by the offender. Here he held a council with the chiefs, which resulting unsatisfactorily, he appears to have ordered his men to fire. After the first discharge of their muskets, the soldiers were quite at the mercy of the Indians, and they were all massacred.

It does not seem that the affair was anticipated by the Indians, but they evidently prepared themselves for it as soon as they knew what the troops came for.

What occurred after the party entered the village is only known through the Indians.

One report says, that just at the close of the interview Lieutenant Grattan took out his watch and said, "It is getting late, and I can't wait any longer;" to which the Bear replied, "I have done all I could; and since you will have him, now push on and take him," or something to that effect, and then turned to walk away. As he did so, he was shot by the soldiers, and wounded in three places. I am inclined to think this report is true.

It is not improbable that the Bear was sincere in his desire to give up the man, but he could not carry out his wishes.

I enclose the report of Lieutenant Fleming in relation to the affair, a statement made by a young gentleman, Mr. J. H. Reed, of St. Louis, who was here living with Lieutenant Grattan, and who heard all the reports that were circulated at the time, and statements made by Mr. Bordeau, at whose house the first talk with the Bear took place, and by a young man named Allen, a man of character and veracity, I think, who accompanied Lieutenant Grattan from the post to Bordeau's house. It is Mr. Bordeau's interest to put the case in as favorable a light for the Indians as he can. These statements will enable the General to form a judgment on the merits of the case.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. HOFFMAN,

Major and Brevet Lieut. Col. 6th Infantry, commanding.

Bvt. Maj. N. F. PAGE, *A. A. General,*

Department of West, Jefferson Barracks.

Respectfully submitted to the Secretary of War.

S. COOPER, *Adj. General.*

There is nothing in the accompanying papers which corroborate the statement of Lieutenant Colonel Hoffman that "*there is no doubt that Lieutenant Grattan left this post with a desire to have a fight with the Indians.*" While this remark adds nothing to the character of Lieutenant Grattan for bravery, it would seem to detract from his judgment as an officer.

S. COOPER, *Adj. General.*

A. G. OFFICE, *January 3, 1855.*

Report of Lieutenant Fleming.

FORT LARAMIE, *November 19, 1854.*

SIR: In compliance with your instructions I have the honor to make the following report concerning the massacre of a detachment of G company 6th infantry, by the Sioux Indians, near Fort Laramie, and also the orders given Lieutenant Grattan by me.

On the 18th of August, 1854, an emigrant came to the fort, reported that the Sioux Indians had killed one of his cattle, and that he had barely escaped with his life. The same day the head chief of the Sioux, the "Bear," came and reported that one of the Indians had killed a cow belonging to an emigrant, and he wished to state to me that the offender did not belong to his band, but was a Minicoujon. At the same time he spoke about the depredations of the Minicoujon band at the bridge, 130 miles above the fort, this summer, and said their hearts were bad towards the whites, and promised to give up the offender. On the 19th I sent Lieutenant Grattan, with the interpreter, one sercant, one corporal, and twenty-seven men, with two twelve-pounder howitzers, to receive the offender. I learned that there were only about fifteen lodges of the Minicoujon band encamped with the

other Indians, and I gave Lieutenant Grattan orders to go and receive the offender ; and in case of refusal to give him up, after ascertaining the disposition of the Indians, to act upon his own discretion, and to be careful not to hazard an engagement without certainty of success. I also gave Lieutenant Grattan directions to tell the chief that the Indian would not be injured in any way whatever, and that I would keep him at the fort till his father, the agent, arrived. It appears the chief tried, or at least made Lieutenant Grattan think that he tried, to give up the Indian who committed the depredation. Last year we had a skirnish with the Minicoujon band, but were on the best and most friendly terms with all the others ; and the force sent was sent only to act, if necessary, against the few lodges of the above hostile band. It may be thought that the treacherous Indians were trusted too far ; but at the same time we must remember that with so few troops as were stationed at Fort Laramie, so far in the Indian country, surrounded by thousands of Indians, it becomes absolutely necessary to rely on the good faith of some of them even for the safety of the garrison itself. Lieutenant Grattan, with his whole command, was massacred, and I have no doubt, from all I am able to learn, he was dealt with in a most treacherous manner.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. B. FLEMING,

Second Lieut. 6th Infantry.

Bvt. Lieut. Col. WILLIAM HOFFMAN,

Commanding Fort Laramie.

Statement of Mr. Obridge Allen.

I arrived at this post the day before the massacre of Lieutenant Grattan and his command. On the day of the massacre I accompanied the party to Mr. Bordeau's trading-house. We stopped a few minutes at Mr. Gratiot's, eight or nine miles below this post, where, fearing there might be some trouble with the Indians, I left my overcoat. While here, Lieutenant Grattan ordered his men to load, and just below the house he gave them his orders, telling them to obey only his orders, or those of the sergeant ; said he, "When I give the order, you may fire as much as you d—d please." He told them he didn't believe a gun would be fired, but he "hoped to God they would have a fight."

As we passed the Ogalalas' village, which was on the river three-fourths of a mile from the road, and a mile and a half above that of the Brulés, Lieutenant Grattan told some person—I don't know to whom he was speaking—to tell them not to leave their camp ; if they did, he would "crack into them."

About half a mile from this point I looked back and saw that the Ogalalas were driving up their horses, and I called Lieutenant Grattan's attention to the fact. On reaching Mr. Bordeau's, the Lieutenant asked for him, and when he came out he told him what he had come for, and requested him to send for the Bear, the chief of the Brulés.

The chief was somewhere near, and came in a minute or two. The Lieutenant asked Mr. Bordeau to tell him that he had come for the man who had killed the cow, and he wanted to know if they would give him up. The Bear made some answer, and I asked the man with whom I was talking what he said. He replied, "They are not going to give him up." Then Mr. Grattan said to Mr. Bordeau in a very emphatic manner, "You tell the Bear that I have come down here for that man, and I'll have him or die." The bear then spoke to the Indians who were standing about—there were a good many—and they all went into the village. He then asked the Lieutenant to go down to the lodge and see the man himself. Then Lieutenant Grattan marched his party into the village, accompanied by the Bear, who was mounted behind the interpreter. I then went with a friend, a trader, to his lodge a few steps off, and returned in a minute or two, and mounted my horse to join the Lieutenant; but just then Mr. Bordeau asked me to let him have my mare to ride to the village, and I did so. I then got on top of the house to see what would happen.

* The party was halted about thirty yards from two lodges which were pitched on the edge of a small slough which runs through the camp, in one of which the offender lived. The two cannon were placed near each other, the largest on the right, and the infantry were divided into two parts, half on the right of the cannon and half on the left. The cannon were loaded at Bordeau's house. The men all sat down on the ground.

The council lasted about three quarters of an hour, and during this time I saw many Indians collecting and mounting their horses near the river, and the women and children were leaving the village. At length, I saw the soldiers stand up and bring their pieces down as if to fire, and at that moment I heard, I thought, the report of Indian guns, followed immediately by that of muskets. The two cannon were fired directly after. I then saw the limber of the gun turned and start to leave the camp, followed by the wagon. A man was trying to get into the wagon. At the same time the soldiers all commenced to retreat, pursued by the Indians. The limber was overtaken in a quarter of a mile, and the wagon reached the first point of the bluffs which crosses the road, near half a mile, before it was overtaken. The footmen, about eighteen in number—some who had been with the cannon, without arms—reached the road between the two bluffs which cross it, about a mile, where they were all killed by Indians who followed them, and, as I supposed, by those who came from the Ogalala camp above. I saw a great many coming from there over the second point of bluffs. Three or four men were killed near the cannon. The interpreter, who was mounted, and a soldier who was on the Lieutenant's horse, were overtaken by some Indians who came from near the river below Bordeau's house, passing close to it, near the wagon where they were killed. The soldiers were loading and firing as they retreated.

Mr. Bordeau's house was surrounded by some two to three hundred lodges in one group, having a vacant space in the centre; and adjoining this group was another of about a hundred lodges, also having a space in the centre. It was in this village that the lodge of the offender was situated, about three hundred yards from the house.

When the firing took place, there were only about fifty Indians in front of the troops. The others were either concealed in the slough, or were getting ready near the river, which was three or four hundred yards distant.

I have heard that it is said, that Lieutenant Grattan was intoxicated at the time; but there is no truth in the charge. He did not drink a drop of liquor, that I saw, from the time he left the fort till I parted from him, and there was no appearance of his having drank anything. At Mr. Gratiot's he took a drink of water. On the way down, I noticed that the interpreter was drunk, and I told Mr. Grattan that he had a small flask of liquor. The Lieutenant asked him for it to take a drink; but instead of drinking, he broke it on his saddle.

I remained at Mr. Bordeau's all night. The Indians came back there immediately after the affair, and tried to break into his house, but some friendly Indians, and men with him, prevented their doing so. They came thus frequently during the night, and Mr. B. gave them what goods they demanded of him.

Statement of J. H. Reed.

At the request of Colonel Hoffman, I make the following statement in regard to the massacre of the troops under the command of Lieut. Grattan, on the 19th of August last.

I was on my way to Salt Lake City with Col. Steptoe's command, when I met with an accident which entirely disabled me, whereupon I was conveyed by my friends in the train to Fort Laramie. Arriving there on the 16th of July, I was taken to Mr. Grattan's room, and remained there a recipient of his kindness until his death. During this time, several instances of insubordination manifested themselves among the Indians. The most prominent was the killing of some cattle belonging to the post interpreter, even within the government reserve. At length, the act was done which led to the massacre of Mr. Grattan and his men. I state nothing in this paper which I do not believe myself; and my belief is founded, not on the quantity of reports which I may have heard, but on the character of the men from whom they came. I am glad to say that every man in the country, who has not a direct interest in another direction, comes to the same conclusion that I do.

A few days before the slaughter of the troops, an emigrant informed Mr. Fleming, who was temporarily in command of the fort, that on the road below, an Indian had shot at him, and afterwards had killed a cow, or an ox, belonging to him. Nothing was said on the subject, and we set it down as another instance of the contempt felt by the Indians for the power and authority of the government. On the 18th of August, Martoh-Ioway, (which literally means the "Bear that scatters,") who was appointed a chief of the tribe by Col. Mitchell, in his treaty of 1851, came to the fort to inform Mr. Fleming that a cow, belonging to an emigrant, had been killed by an Indian, and to tell him

that if he would send down for the Indian, he would be delivered up to him.

Before proceeding, I will state that although it is now denied by some persons in this neighborhood that the Indian did shoot at the emigrant, and asserted that the cow was deserted by its owner, and wandered into the Indian village, yet I do not believe such to be the facts. The emigrant, as I am informed, stated that he had been shot at, and the Indians confirm it. The story derived from the Indians is, that the man who did the deed had lost some relatives in a skirmish which took place in the summer or fall of 1853; that the offender said that his relatives were dead, and that he wanted to die; but not until he had avenged himself upon the whites. The Indians, in continuation, say that this offending Indian approached the owner of the cow, who was with his animal, with three arrows in his hand—one of which he shot at the emigrant but missed him. The Indian then said, "I have missed you; you are in the hands of God Almighty; but I will kill your cow," which he did. The emigrant was offered ten dollars for his cow when passing the trading-house of Mr. Bordeau, but declined accepting that amount, asking twenty-five dollars for her.

To return to the place from which I digressed. On the day following the one on which the "Bear" had informed Mr. Fleming of the matter, I asked Mr. Grattan if he would like to be sent against the Indians. He said he would like very well to go, but would not go unless he had orders to bring the offender. He did not think that it would be necessary to fight in order to obtain him; but in the course of this conversation, as well as on several other occasions, he told me that if it was ever necessary to fight Indians when they were in their village, he would place his artillery some three or four hundred yards from their village, and run the risk of their driving him from his position. This assertion was made to me while Mr. Grattan was preparing to start on the expedition. I am apt, therefore, prepared to believe that he marched straight into the midst of two or three villages for the purpose of attacking them. Mr. Grattan had, ever since I had known him, a great admiration for the "Bear," and implicit confidence in him. Whether the "Bear" was treacherous or not, no man can tell. I have it from the best authority that before Mr. Grattan had left Mr. Bordeau's houses for the purpose of marching into the village, and while he was still demanding the man, the "Bear" spoke to the young men in the Sioux language, and from that moment they commenced catching their horses, stripping off their robes, and preparing for battle. They certainly had taken their positions, and were concealed when Mr. Grattan entered into their midst. Some who were in the vicinity say that the "Bear" told Mr. Grattan "that he was a soldier; to come in and take the man." Others say that promises were made that the man would be given to him. It was something that occurred after they were in the village which produced the fight, as all accounts agree that Mr. Grattan did not commence firing upon his entrance, but some time elapsed during which his men were lying about on the grass. His musketry was discharged before his cannon, and the "Bear" was wounded in three places. There is as much difficulty in determining who fired first as in any of the other details of the transaction. It is

my belief that no Frenchman in this country can tell the same story twice the same way, if the incidents come under their observation when they are cool; much less can they take notes accurately, and report the details correctly, when they know that the scene which they are witnessing involves life and property.

Every one whom I have heard speak on the subject, coincides in saying that great blame is to be attached to the interpreter. He has been for a long time very odious to the Indians, and there is no doubt that, on this occasion, he inflamed them by rash speeches and threats. Mr. Grattan made several unsuccessful efforts to restrain him.

Some other reports prejudicial to Mr. Grattan's memory were circulated for a short time after his death. They bore the marks of untruth with them, and failed to obtain credence. Such were the stories of his having run away during the fight; his being intoxicated at the time, and his boasting on the way that "he was going down to give the d—d red skins hell." Some of these stories I believe to be untrue; the others are disproved by witnesses in whom I confide.

J. H. REED.

Statement of Mr. Bordeau, a trader living at the place where the affair occurred.

I was at home when Mr. Grattan came down with his party. He stopped at my house, and told me he had come down to take prisoner an Indian who had killed a cow belonging to a Mormon, and he wished me to assist him. At his request, I sent for the chief, Martoh-Ioway, who is the chief of the band (the Brulés) to which the offender belonged; and on his arrival from the camp, which was very near my house, I told him for Mr. Grattan that he had come down for the Indian who had killed the cow, and that he (the Indian) must go with him to the fort to remain there till the agent arrived, when he would decide what should be done in the matter. The chief said, "Very well, but I must go and put on my dress-coat before I give an answer." He returned in a few minutes with three other chiefs, and they were immediately followed by a messenger from the camp, who said that the man refused to give himself up—he said he would die first. Lieutenant Grattan then asked where his lodge was, and the chief pointed it out to him. The Lieutenant said he would take his command within sixty yards of it, and he'd have him, dead or alive. He then moved around the house and went a little way into the camp, when he halted. Then a second messenger came and said, as the former had said, that the man would not give himself up—he would rather die. The Lieutenant said again that he would go within sixty yards of the lodge, and that he must have him. He then told his men what he was going to do, and how they must act; that when he gave the word, they must fire on every man that was not a white man. I then told the chiefs that they had better be in a hurry and get the man as quick as they could. The chief said it was their custom to make a demand four times, and if it was not agreed to then, then they acted; and he wanted the Lieuten-

ant to observe this rule. He said that he was determined to go to the lodge. I told him that he was going into a very bad place, and that he had better prepare himself well. He said he had two revolvers, with twelve shots. I told him to take them out of his holsters and be ready. I then turned back and got upon a robe press, where I could see him till he halted. During this time his interpreter was in the camp, bantering the Indians and irritating them. I told him that he would make trouble, and that if he would put him in my house, I would settle the difficulty in thirty minutes. He said he would stop him. He had told him several times to stop, but he did not mind him.

As soon as he halted he was immediately surrounded by Indians, and one of the chiefs came running to me and said, "My friend, come on; the interpreter is going to get us into a fight, and they are going to fight if you don't come." I got on a horse to go, but finding the stirrups too long I turned back, and the chief came to me a second time urging me to go. I started with him, but when I got within 150 yards I saw that it was too late—the excitement was too great. At this moment the first gun was fired by the soldier on the right, and I then heard an Indian call out not to fire; that they had killed one man, and might be satisfied; but the words were hardly out of his mouth before the firing commenced on his left; then I turned back home, and before I reached the house I heard one cannon fired; and when I got on the top of my house I saw the second cannon fired by Lieutenant Grattan, and then he fell. As he was firing the cannon, I saw the soldiers putting three wounded men in the wagon; and when he fell, the wagon moved off. Two other men fell about ten feet from him. One soldier who was holding on to the wagon was killed in about twenty yards, and the wagon was pursued by Indians on horseback, to a little rise about half a mile distant, where they stopped it and killed the other soldiers. I then completed the arrangements I had been making to protect myself. A rush was made on the house by a number of Indians, but our friends among them interfered and prevented them doing us any harm. Then a chief, Little Thunder, came and told me that since the Indians had killed all the soldiers at the camp, they were going to kill all at the fort and burn it up. I told him to stop them; that if they did not do any more harm, and did not disturb anybody on the river, I thought their grandfather would forgive them for what they had done. He went out immediately, and, with all the other chiefs, harangued the Indians, and did all they could to put down the excitement; but my opinion is, that if the sun had been two hours higher they could not have stopped it.

They immediately broke up their camp and crossed the river—all except the old chief, who was wounded, who remained with a strong guard about him all night. Little Thunder was going backwards and forwards all night to keep down the excitement. Indians were coming to my house all night begging; they said they had been waiting on the agent two months, that their children were starving, and that they were bound to have what they wanted. The chiefs told me to give them what they wanted, because they were just trying to pick a quarrel with us to kill us all, and I gave them whatever they demanded. During

the night some of the friendly Indians brought in a wounded soldier, and said if his wounds did not kill him, nobody should hurt him. A few minutes after, a chief came in and advised me to hide him somewhere outside, for fear some of the other Indians would find him there, and make it an excuse for killing us. The man said if I could send some one with him he would prefer to go to the fort, and I sent a white man and two Indians with him, who accompanied him about a mile, and he then said he could go himself. About 1 o'clock at night I sent an express up to Lieutenant Fleming, to tell him what had occurred. The next morning, after they had taken the wounded chief over the river, about 500 of them came back and took from me what they wanted, and then went up to the American Fur Company's house and took from there the presents which were stored there for them. In the evening they returned and took the goods belonging to the Fur Company. The massacre took place on Saturday evening, and on Monday morning I received a note from Lieutenant Fleming, requesting me to bury the dead, and I did so. It is not true that the Indians told me I should not bury the dead—that the soldiers must come and do it themselves.

After daylight in the morning, the wounded soldier returned just as the Indians were leaving, and I kept him till next day, Monday, when I sent him to the fort.

There was no excitement before the soldiers arrived, and when they came in sight the Indians expressed their surprise and wondered who they were. No one at my house knew anything of the difficulty, and had heard nothing of the soldiers coming.

Report of Major General Scott.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
New York, December 15, 1854.

COLONEL: The general-in-chief has observed the following passages in relation to the murder of Lieut. Grattan and command, in the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs of the 25th ult., as published in the papers of the day:

“The Sioux belong to bands in amity with the United States—bands which have annuities due them under treaty stipulations; and the Mormons should, under the provisions of the ‘Intercourse Act,’ have applied to the agent, who was in the vicinity, for redress, and he could, under the law, have paid out of the annuities for the property taken; but no officer of the military department was, in my opinion, authorized to arrest or try the Indian for the offence charged against him. * *

“Occasions frequently arise in our intercourse with the Indians, requiring the employment of force, although the whites may be, and often are, the aggressors. The Indian Bureau would be relieved from embarrassment, and rendered more efficient, if, in such places, the department had the direct control of the means necessary to execute its own orders. A force better adapted to the Indian service than any now employed could, it is believed, be readily organized. But careful

attention, and kind and humane treatment, will generally have more influence upon the savage than bayonets and gunpowder."

As the officers of the army stationed in the Indian country may be influenced by these statements—coming from one who is supposed to be acquainted with the laws regulating the intercourse with the Indian tribes—the general-in-chief requests the notice of the Secretary of War may be called to the errors, both of fact and opinion, which they contain.

1st. The Indian agent was *not* in the vicinity, he being at the time of the massacre eight days' journey from Fort Laramie, (see report of Major Winship,) and coming from the south at nearly right-angles to the line of travel of the emigrants who made the complaint.

2d. As to the authority of the officer of the military department to arrest the Indian, the proviso to the 29th section of the act of June 30, 1834, makes it "competent for the President to require any military officer of the United States to execute the duties of Indian agent;" and the regulations of the army, made by the authority of the President, (§ 89, edition of 1847.) provided that, "when there are no Indian agents stationed in the vicinity of a post, the commandant will consider himself as authorized to act as agent for Indian affairs," &c., &c.

The Indian agent does not reside at Fort Laramie, or within six hundred miles of it. The commanding officers have repeatedly called attention to this fact, and requested that he might be ordered to live at the fort; but the requirements of the law, that every Indian agent "shall reside, and keep his agency within or near the territory of the tribe for which he may be agent," have not been enforced so far as the Indian tribes in the vicinity of Fort Laramie are concerned; and the duties of his office, with few exceptions, in all that relates to intercourse with those Indians, have fallen on, and been discharged by, the commanding officer of the post.

For several years past the agent has been at Fort Laramie not more than two weeks in the year, coming up to distribute the annuities, and leaving immediately afterwards.

The post of Fort Laramie was established pursuant to a special act of Congress, for the protection of the emigrants to the west of the Rocky mountains.

As to the reflections which the report of the Commissioner casts on the service, the General merely remarks, that the army, whilst having to bear the brunt of the consequences of the mismanagement of others in Indian affairs, has ever been the friend of the red man, and stood between him and the violence and extortion of the white.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

IRVIN McDOWELL,

Assistant Adjutant General.

Col. S. COOPER,

Adjutant General, Washington, D. C.